



Massachusetts  
Historical Society  
*Founded 1791*

# Position Specification

Massachusetts Historical Society

President



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# Position Specification

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### Mission

To promote understanding of the history of Massachusetts and the nation by collecting and communicating materials and resources that foster historical knowledge

Founded in 1791, the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS) is an invaluable resource for American history, life, and culture. Its extraordinary collections tell the story of America through millions of rare and unique documents, artifacts, and irreplaceable national treasures. Today, the MHS promotes historical understanding through its collections, exhibitions, and programs.

In FY24, the MHS launched a three-year strategy centered around a “sharpened focus.” Some of the key goals in this strategy include:

- Strategically add to and strengthen the collection to reflect diverse voices and prepare for the scholarship of the future
- Promote the teaching of history and civics across the K-12 population in Massachusetts
- Increase access to the collection and refocus publications
- Promote the MHS’s researchers and fellows and the historical expertise they provide
- Deepen and broaden the Society’s financial support
- Increase the sustainability of the MHS

The MHS has an annual operating budget of approximately \$8.5M and a team of approximately 70 dedicated staff. The MHS is governed by a Board of Trustees, which is currently made up of ~25 individuals, in addition to 1 Life Trustee and 9 Trustees Emeriti. It also benefits from the expertise of a 33-member Advisory Council.

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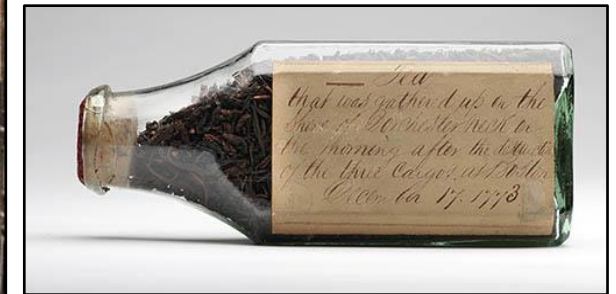
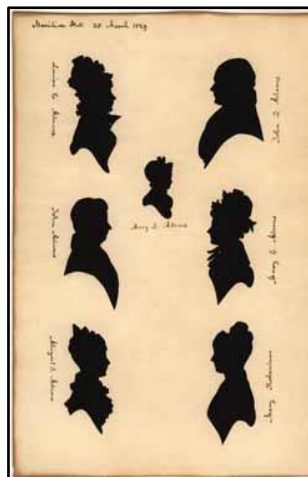
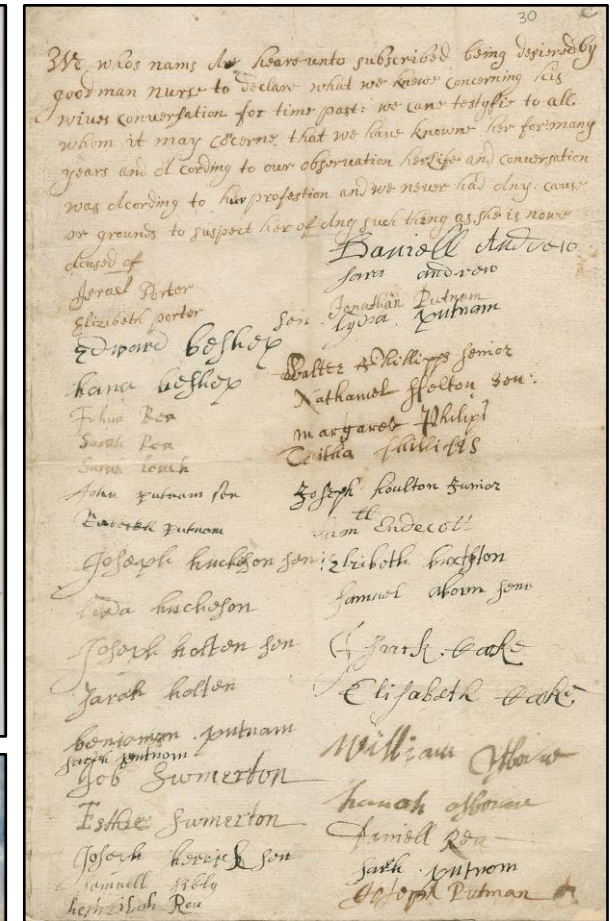
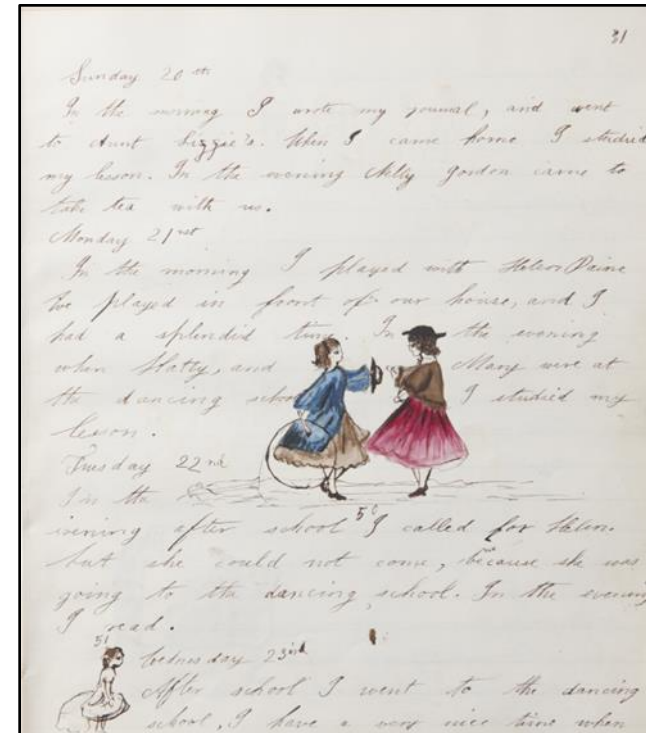
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The MHS collection tells the story of America through more than 14 million documents, artifacts, and national treasures. From the letters of John and Abigail Adams, the personal papers and drawings of Thomas Jefferson, diaries written during the Civil War, and first-person accounts of daily life during COVID-19, to photographs, works of art, and historical artifacts, the MHS collects materials from all segments of the population and all time periods. This includes serving as an active collector today.

The MHS welcomes everyone to draw upon its collections to encourage a richer appreciation of the past. It uses its resources to educate, connect, and inspire, building historical empathy, fostering civic responsibility, and generating an awareness of and respect for our shared humanity.

For more information on the MHS collection, please visit

<https://www.masshist.org/collections>



# Position Specification

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### Discovery and Convening

The MHS strives to foster a research community that actively promotes the study of the history of Massachusetts and the nation. It offers an exceptional range of resources for making and sharing historical discoveries. Visitors can enjoy public talks, tours, exhibitions, scholarly seminars and conferences, and gain access to its unparalleled collections through its research library and website. The MHS welcomes a wide variety of researchers—representing 35 countries and all 50 states—from high school students, to family historians, to professors and Pulitzer Prize-winning authors. These researchers network, share their findings, and exchange ideas.



### Learning and Inspiration

The MHS is dedicated to strengthening K-12 education in Massachusetts and beyond by providing ever-expanding access to its collections. It serves teachers and students through three main educational initiatives: National History Day in Massachusetts (NHD), teacher professional development, and robust online resources.



### Community and Engagement

The MHS offers an engaging roster of programming to foster historical knowledge, and it welcomes everyone to attend, question, and contribute. It provides a forum for debate; hosts a variety of events that delve into the complexities of history; and encourages people to share their observations, interpretations, and ideas.

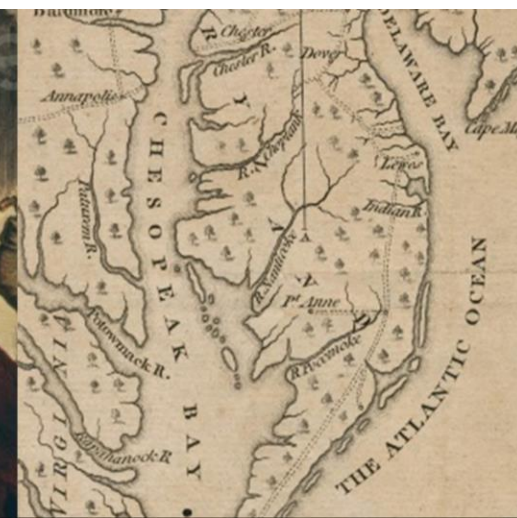
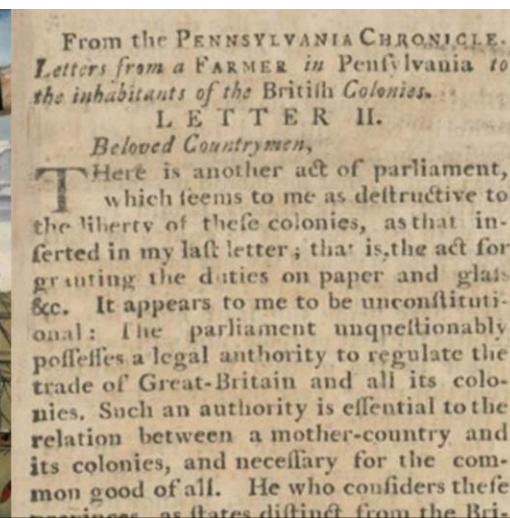
To read more about the MHS, please visit: <https://www.masshist.org/>

# Position Specification

## The Role

As the chief executive who reports to and works closely with the Board of Trustees, the President is responsible for furthering the mission and vision of the MHS, as well as managing the strategic, programmatic, and financial operations of the organization.

Leveraging the organization's incredible history, the President will lead the MHS into the future during a time of immense opportunity and momentum. With a deep, demonstrated passion for history, the President will be an engaging and inspiring leader adept at building relationships with a wide range of constituents including the Board, staff, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, local governments, community partners, historians, donors, and other stakeholders. Bringing an entrepreneurial spirit balanced by a strong sense of fiscal responsibility, the President will identify and execute strategic priorities for the MHS. The President will empower, manage, and cultivate an outstanding team, many of whom are experts in their respective fields. The intent is to maintain the MHS's commitment to its existing community of scholars, community members, and supporters, while leading the organization's goal to broaden access and increase engagement. Equally important will be leading the MHS's efforts in fundraising, with a particular emphasis on diversifying financial support and ensuring long-term financial stability for the organization. In partnership with the MHS Board, the President will continue to shape the organization's future and drive progress to increase engagement, impact, and awareness.



# Position Specification

## Candidate Profile (page 1 of 2)

The Massachusetts Historical Society seeks a collaborative and passionate leader who will drive the strategic direction and operational management of one of the most venerable historic organizations in the country. This role requires an individual with experience successfully engaging with a wide array of contemporaries, identifying and setting priorities and leading through change, and leading through collegiality. The candidate will bring a track record of success in fundraising and revenue generation, building partnerships and leading through influence, and demonstrated experience managing teams and budgets of a relevant scale.

*In terms of the performance, personal competencies, and experience required for the position, we would highlight the following:*



### Personal Attributes and Competencies



#### Setting Strategy

The ideal candidate will possess the skills to partner with a Board of Trustees in setting organizational strategy. This will include bringing creative ideas to broaden and increase engagement with the MHS, as well as anticipating the ever-changing landscape in which the MHS operates. This should be coupled with a tactical orientation, excellent listening skills, and a bent towards collaboration and cooperation.



#### Fundraising and Financial Acumen

Comfort with fundraising and financial management is essential for the position. The candidate should have a proven track record of securing support and diversifying revenue streams. The candidate must bring the business acumen necessary to allocate resources wisely, balancing strategic risk-taking with fiscal responsibility. Ideally, the successful candidate will bring significant experience cultivating private contributions from a wide array of sources and at a scale significant to the MHS.



#### Influence and Relationship-Building Skills

The candidate must excel in relationship building, demonstrating diplomacy and emotional intelligence. Excellent written and verbal communication skills are critical, reflective of serving as a public face and ambassador for the MHS across a wide array of settings.

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## Candidate Profile (page 2 of 2)

### Personal Attributes and Competencies



#### Talent Management and Team Building

Effective talent management, team building, and retention are vital skills for the next President of the MHS. The President will lead a team which in many cases includes experts in their respective fields. When opportunities arise, talent recruitment will be expected in this role.



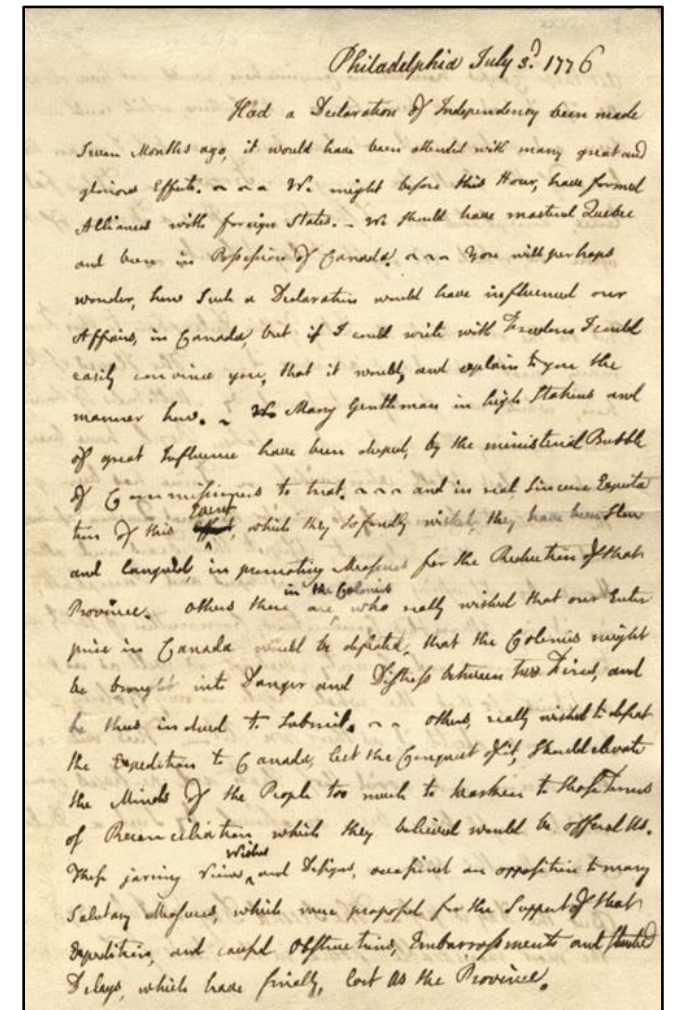
#### Character and Interpersonal Awareness

The successful candidate will be an individual of the highest integrity, transparent, authentic, and flexible. The position requires a high degree of intellect balanced with accessibility and openness. The successful candidate should be a lifelong learner and exhibit an interest in continuous self-improvement. Essential will be an “institution-first” approach, with a focus on promotion of the organization above self, other individuals, or viewpoints.



#### Passion for History

A deep passion for and engagement with history is critical. While a PhD in history is not required, the candidate must possess the curiosity and intellectual horsepower to connect with historians and supporters of the MHS. This passion for the relevance and importance of history and civics is seen as underpinning MHS’s continued work, expand its reach, and ensure its long-term relevance and success.





# Position Specification

## Contact

**Russell Reynolds Associates, the global leadership advisory firm, has been exclusively engaged to lead this search.**

Given the need for confidentiality throughout this process, prospective candidates are invited to reach out directly to our search consultants at [mhsresident@russellreynolds.com](mailto:mhsresident@russellreynolds.com) with a resume and brief expression of interest.

**We welcome nominations and expressions of interest to the Russell Reynolds team. All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.**

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